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East Timor : arrests, torture, and interrogation

Altogether it is believed that 4,000 East Timorese people may have been called in for interrogation by the Indonesian forces of occupation since the capture of Xanana Gusmao, the leader of the East Timorese resistance. According to National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM) protected sources, these detainees have been submitted to torture and humiliation during interrogation.

A press release from the CNRM issued in Geneva, 12 February 1993 says these reports are confirmed by Dom Ximenes Belo, Catholic Bishop of Dili, who said the persecution of Timor's Christians and of those who did not recognise Timor as part of Indonesia had worsened since Xanana's arrest.

Speaking to Portugal's Catholic Radio Renascenca, Belo explained "When the people are taken to prison, the first thing they do is beat them up. I have received letters from prisoners ... telling me about all types of torture, electric shocks, burning of genitals with cigarettes, placing people in barrels of cold water and whipping, until they say they are FRETILIN collaborators".

He said those arrested were also forced to confess that Catholic bishops and priests organised demonstrations and were against Indonesia.

Reports are also coming through that Timorese are being forced to take part in ceremonies where they have to swear allegiance before the Indonesian flag, loyalty to Suharto and their acceptance of the principles of Pancasila, the Indonesian State ideology.

No guerrillas have surrendered to the Indonesians since the capture of Xanana Gusmao. In fact the opposite is true: FALINTIL, the armed wing of the Resistance, have been carrying out frequent attacks on the Indonesian army illegally occupying the country.

Reports of fictitious surrenders have been spread by the Indonesian regime via their press in a futile attempt to break the will of the East Timorese people.

According to a report filed by AFP from Lisbon on 12 February, Belo called for the former Portuguese colony to be granted autonomy by Indonesia. The Bishop said the "most realistic" solution was for the country to be granted autonomous status identical to that granted by the US to Puerto Rico. East Timor would remain "economically linked to Indonesia but would retain its own cultural and ethnic identity", he said in Dili with a private Portuguese television channel, SIC.

Belo said he would write to the UN secretary-general Boutros-Ghali condemning Indonesian abuses of human rights in East Timor.

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East Timor: "breaches of human rights, lies and falsehoods"

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"I'm not happy with the situation which reigns throughout the territory where there are breaches of human rights and (individual) beliefs and the imposition of lies and falsehoods," Belo said. He was speaking to journalists who had been attending the trial of Xanana Gusmao, leader of the East Timor independentist movement, who was captured in Dili on November 20. Xanana is appearing in court on rebellion and conspiracy charges and could face life imprisonment if convicted. (gn:tapol reg.easttimor 12.2.93)

A three-column news item in the 3 February *Jawa Pos* gives a comprehensive preview of the trial. According to Tapol, the report reveals once again the newspaper's privileged access to all the preparations under way by the army and the prosecution for the trial of Xanana Gusmao. It lists all the prosecution witnesses and summarises the testimonies of several of them. The paper publishes the timetable of the trial, the clear assumption being that the trial will proceed according to a carefully laid plan. No mention is made of any time being allowed for defence witnesses. Here we have the Show Trial par excellence. In all the years of following political trials in Indonesian courts, this is the first time we have had evidence of such detailed planning worked out and made public in advance in this way. Clearly, the court and the prosecution have agreed to this plan, making no allowance for anything the defendant and his defence counsel may intend to do.

Jawa Pos also has privileged access to the testimonies of several prosecution witnesses, and has published statements by them in separate articles. There is far too much material for us to attempt full coverage of *Jawa Pos*' preview. All we can attempt is this short summary.

Trial Timetable

According to Jawa Pos, the verdict in the trial of Xanana Gusmao will be announced by the court on 20 March. The newspaper publishes the timetable of the trial as follows:

15 - 24 February, hearing the testimonies of witnesses. These will be marathon hearings with sessions almost every day.

26 - 27 February will be devoted to questioning the defendant.

4 March, the prosecution will present his summing up and demand for sentence.

10 March, the defendant and his defence counsel will present their defence pleas.

12 and 13 March, the prosecution will respond to the defence pleas and the defence will respond to the prosecution.

20 March, the court will deliver its verdict.

[The summing-up stage should allow the defence whatever time required to prepare their statements. This is clearly not being allowed for.]

Prosecution witnesses

According to *Jawa Pos*, the prosecution witnesses will include:

Gregorio da Cunha Saldanha [now serving a life sentence];

Francisco Branca Miranda [now serving a 15-year sentence];

Mauhudu alias Jose da Costa, a close guerrilla associate of the defendant who was captured in January 1992;

Armandina Maria Gusmao, the younger sister of Xanana and her husband Gil dos Santos;

Maria Olandina Isabel Caciro Alves, described as chair of Fretilin's youth organisation, Unetin, who was an announcer on Fretilin's Radio Maubere in 1975;

Akuilong, a businessman who allegedly transported Xanana to his various hideouts;

Luis Cardoso, village head of Datina, who allegedly helped Akuilong, and provided hideouts and supplies for Xanana;

Maukalo alias Antonio Soares da Silva, a guerrilla who was instructed by Xanana to seize weapons from the Indonesian armed forces, attack soldiers and rob local inhabitants in 1979.

Others due to appear include Agosto Pereira and his wife Angelica Araujo [sister of Abilio Araujo] in whose house Xanana was taking refuge when he was captured and several members of the Araujo family;

Regina Conceicao de Araujo Serrano, 18, niece of Agosto Pereira who has 'confessed' to being raped by Xanana. [A statement received in London from a women's group in Dili earlier this month categorically denied this, saying that their sister, Rege, had been forced into making this confession about something which is pure fabrication.]

Hendriques Belmiro [arrested shortly before Xanana's capture and brutally tortured to extract information from him about Xanana's whereabouts].

[Apart from a few soldiers who took part in Xanana's capture who will also testify, it must be assumed that all the prosecution witnesses are in custody. Some are themselves due to be tried.]

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